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HENRY WARD BEECHER.

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WHAT IS RELIGION?

I shall take for a starting point, in the remarks that I make this morning, the 19th verse of the 2d chapter of the 2d Epistle of Timothy:

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his."

The context is this:

"Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure."

We have come in our day into times precisely like those of the apostle, in which there is a great movement throughout the whole civilized world, and a great change of feeling, either of apprehension or of words, in regard to the stability of the Christian religion.

There are two classes that look upon this matter from very different standpoints. On the one side are those who are devout philosophers in religion, and who hear doctrines which seem to them to be very strange expositions of Christianity—doctrines which they have not been accustomed to. They see the manners and customs of religious institutions or churches very much disturbed; and they have an impression that evil is coming in like a flood, that the foundations are being removed, that the old landmarks are being taken out of the way, that everything is going to wreck and ruin, and that rank infidelity, atheism and anarchy are going to overflow the world.

Then, on the other extreme, there are those who feel that religion is not worth anything at all if it stands on foundations of the past; but that it is like an old stubble-field, that

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it was valuable one or two thousand years ago, that some wheat was reaped from it then, but all that was good in it has been gathered out, and that we are coming, by progress, to a new era. Some think it is to be an era of spiritualism, in which there are to be glimpses of light and knowledge from other spheres; and yet, what foundation it is to stand upon they do not know, though they think it will stand on something.

In sympathy with these, or in antagonism to them, as the case may be, there is a host of men who believe that science is breaking the seal, and that the things of God, hidden from the foundations of the world, are being made known, now, through the ministrations of science; and they say, "Away with your superstitions and dogmas and doctrines! They may once have been helpful; but the time has come for the shining of truth through science."

So, in these different ways—some out of fear for the integrity of religious things, and some with the hope that there is to be a far more blessed day of knowledge than ever before, and almost all, I think, with an amiable, kind, humane feeling—this great outlying, skirting host are of opinion that religion is pretty much done up, and that we are now to look for something better.

To all such I say, The foundations of God stand yet, firm and sure; and I declare that the essential elements of Christianity were never so apparent as to-day; that they were never so influential; that they were never so likely to produce institutions of power; that they never had such a hold on human reason and human conscience; and that the religious impulse of the human race was never so deep, and never so strong in its current.

In the first place, then, we must recollect that there may be very great changes around about religion, in its external forms, without any essential interior change, nay, even with the augmentation of its interior power. I will admit that there has been a great change in the forms in which facts have been woven into doctrines. In other words, the great outlying facts of human consciousness—the nature of man; the character of intelligence and of volition; the truths of responsi-

bility and moral government; what they are; how they are to be brought together into a perfect system; the existence of God and of a divine providence—all these things have been held in various ways, and have been philosophically stated in different forms; and that there has been, and is yet to be, a great change in the mode of stating these things, I do not deny; but I hold that their statement is one which grows better and better from age to age. Some men think that anything which is a revelation from God must be always one and the same thing; but God's revelation is alphabetic it is a revelation of letters, and they can be combined and re combined in ten thousand different words, varying endlessly. The great facts which are fundamental to consciousness, once being given, are alphabetic; and these facts may be combined; and with the development of the human race in intelligence and moral excellence they go on taking new forms; and larger experiences must have a larger expression. The trouble with a statement in an early age is, that while it is true to the sum of the knowledge of that age, each age develops an individuality of its own, knowledge making it larger; and a statement must be made which is as large as the actual experience of the human soul has been.

Take agriculture. In the earliest period of the settlement of a neighborhood, men clear a piece containing a few acres of ground, and put such a fence around it as they can afford, and plow among the stumps, and leave them standing; but as time goes on the stumps disappear, and in twenty or thirty years, when they are gone, a man, coming back, and missing them, says, "Why, where are those precious stumps that I remember used to be in this field? The boys have easy times plowing now-a-days; but when I was a boy it meant something to plow among those stumps and their roots. This is not what I call farming. You are all going to effeminacy." It is not such farming as he was used to; but it is better than the farming that belonged to primitive times, which may have had its pleasant memories and associations, but which was not farming in its highest form. Has not agriculture grown? Has it lost ground because the fences and the plows are better than they were at the beginning, and because one

man can now do as much as ten men then could? Has agriculture gone under because its instruments are changed, and because its forms are different? Is not the change it has undergone a sign of advancement and improvement?

So, in the knowledges of the world, and in its various institutions, there have been changes, and there are to be changes; but they are progressive. On the whole, they are not ominous of evil, but are full of fructifications of hope.

The changes of religious institutions trouble people; and if I supposed that the church was an exactly ordered institution, I should be troubled about its changes; but according to my understanding it is not such an institution.

When an architect has drawn the plan of a house, or a public building, his lines are laid down just so, his measurements are precise, and he specifies whether it shall be of wood or brick or stone; and the contract is made according to these specifications, and the builder has to follow them.

Now, there are many who think that the church was sent to us in that way, that there are just such lines and measurements laid down respecting it, and that we are bound to follow those lines and measurements. They think that exact ordinances are prescribed, and that we are under obligation to observe them.

If I believed this, I should look upon the innovations of modern times as dangerous; but I do not believe the church was ordained to be in a particular shape any more than I believe that schools were. I do not believe that the New Testament prescribes that the ordinances and methods of worship shall take on any given form. I do not believe that the rules and regulations of the church were made precise and specific any more than those of town meetings, or the constitutions of the several States, or the Constitution of the United States were. Government is ordained in the nature of man, and it begins to operate, and men find out among themselves, by their experience, that their government is to be formed and administered largely according to the climate and physical characteristics of the country where they are, according to the degree of civilization which they have attained, and according to the exigencies of national life as they arise.

The same is true of religious institutions. I believe that God ordained the church. That is to say, when he made men he made them social beings, so that no man can live without wanting to touch his fellow men somewhere. It is the necessities of men's social natures that have led them to come together in churches.

When patriotism swells in the hearts of men, and sets them on fire, no man wants to be alone in the field, and he seeks his neighbor, who joins him; and the villagers unite together; and the more intense men's feelings are, the more they run to each other. For we are not born to be separate drops, but drops united together to form streams, with channels deep and wide, and with impetuous currents. When God made men with social natures, he ordained that they should come together by their loves, by their tastes, by their enthusiasms; and that ordination is the foundation on which the church stands. It is decreed that you shall come together with your aspiration, with your devotion, with your affection, with your hope.

So God created the church; but whether it should be Presbyterian, or Methodist, or Baptist, or Congregational, or Episcopalian, or Roman Catholic—God has never bothered his head about that, though his zealous disciples have. The form of the instrument of religion is not a part of his decrees. He no more ordained that divine worship should be carried on in certain fixed ways than he ordained that men who live by agriculture should harrow or furrow their fields. Agriculture does not stand on the machines which it employs, but on the necessity of men to eat. When God made men hungry he foreordained agriculture. And in the matter of the church, it does not stand on its ordinances.

But do not think that I am speaking contemptuously of these things. What I desire to be understood as saying is, that men have no business to worship an ordinance. I say that men have no right to make an idol of the church, or of Sunday, or of the Bible, or of anything that is in itself an instrument. Religion is something other than the instrument by which it is produced.

Do I say my prayers to the school-house? No. And yet,

I believe in intelligence; and the school is simply an instrument by which we develop that intelligence. Do I say my prayers to the arithmetic, the geography, and the grammar? No. I think they are useful; but I would kick them every one out of the house if you were to tell me that I must say my prayers to them. They are my servants, my helps, but not my masters.

And so, when men open the doors of the sanctuary on Sunday, the church is not my master: I am its master, for I am a son of God. It is simply the chariot which he has sent to carry me on my journey.

When a minister stands to teach me, is he my master? No. If he can help me, well and good. Like other men, he is to be estimated according to what he can do. What he is, that am I. I am a sinner before God, living on God's mercy and goodness, and that is he. No ordination, no long line of influences, though ten thousand times ten thousand years should rest on his head, would make a man anything but a man. And when he ceases to be a man, he dies, and is gone. All men that live have the same passions and appetites; human nature is the same everywhere; and ministers have their pride, their vanity, their weaknesses and their temptablenesses; they are all just common men; and God never put one of them over his fellows, or made him superior to them. Still less did God ever say to an ordinance, "Go down and stand in the midst of men, and make them bow to you." Therefore, not to the refluent waves, nor to the sprinkling drops, nor to any instrument, will I bow down, and say, "Ye are my master." God is my master; and to these things I say, "Ye are my servants;" and I look down on them all.

Now, when I see that there is change in the institutions of religion, in the currents of government, and in the ordinances of the church, I do not stand quivering, and saying, "Men have departed from the counsels of God, and religion is going to destruction, and we do not know where it will end." I say that religion lies, not in outside things, but in the states of men's minds. It is the way that they think and feel and act that determines what their religion is. Religion

is human experience. It is the soul's action God-ward and man-ward. And if religion is going out of the world, it is not because the old church is unshingled, nor because the familiar bell has stopped swinging in the belfry, nor because men are indifferent to prayer, nor because they do not care for the Book, nor because the ministry is not revered as it used to be. These things may be fortunate or unfortunate, according to circumstances; but religion will not have died out of the world until it has died out of the human soul. Religion is the experience of human souls in their relations to God. Sympathy toward God and men—that is religion; but whether that is decreasing or increasing in power throughout the world will not be judged by these external signs or measurements, but by other and very different ones.

It is said that men do not believe in virtue. Well, when a man tells me that the refinements of the school-men are lapsing on questions which relate to eternal regeneration through the Son of God, and that many of the fine distinctions between ability natural and ability spiritual are going out of men's thoughts and out of much use, I admit it; but I say that the great fundamental truths of religion—namely, the nature of man, the wants of man, and divine love as a sufficient supply for human wants—instead of growing weaker are growing stronger in men's minds.

There has been a great deal of teaching in regard to the depravity of man. I think I could preach to you a doctrine of total depravity, after the old fashioned sort, which would make every one of you red in the face, and angry, so that you would say, "I do not believe a word of it;" and I think I could preach to you what men tried to preach in the olden time on that subject so that you would not one of you deny it.

For example, every man is born at zero. He is nothing at first. We are told that men are born without original righteousness; but this is not half of it; they are born without original anything, except a little sack of pulpy matter. The supreme function at birth is suction. Men are born without a name and without a trade. They are born without power to walk, without power to handle anything, without power to

see, and without power to hear. Their senses are not born until they have been in the world months and months. It is a mere seed that is born. When, therefore, I am told that men are born without original righteousness, I do not find any difficulty in believing that; for they are born without anything. They do not feel nor think. They are a bundle of capacities susceptible of development by-and-by. There is not one element in that wonderful, obscure, undeveloped thing called a *baby*, which is not unfolded by the law of gradualism, little by little, step by step. We do not learn to see except by experience in seeing. The eye is all right; but it is to be trained for its function. We cannot stretch out the hand, or bring it back, or do anything with it until we have learned to use it.

There is a jubilee in the family when the child first walks. The father comes home at night, and the mother says, "Oh, baby has walked! baby has walked!" Yes, it has walked; but it had to practice a great while before it could get up, and stand on its feet, and take one step after another without falling. Walking has to be learned; and when the child has learned to walk, what infinite slappings there are to teach it to not walk where it ought not to! How we strive to teach the child how to talk! and then how we spank him because he talks too much, or at the wrong times! How much time is spent in teaching him how to reach out his hand! and then how his hand gets whipped when he reaches it out and puts it into the sweet-meats! Everything is taught, and everything comes by practice, in these matters.

When, therefore, it is said that men are born in a deplorable state of wickedness, and that there is no original righteousness, you accept it as much as the old divines used to. You state it differently, but you recognize it. It is inherent in human nature. Nobody can deny it as it is stated and explained now, and nobody is disposed to.

But that is not all; it is not possible for man, beginning at nothing, to unfold and grow up to something, without making many mistakes. The child does not walk perfectly at the outset; it is not possible that he should; and you do not set it down against him. The child is not able to use his

hand at once; but nobody sets that down against him. It is a part of God's original design in the world that men shall be born at the seminal point, and grow up gradually toward perfection; and that being the original design, imperfection is a part of it.

As no man can use his eye except he has been drilled to do it, and as no man can use his hand except he has been drilled to do that, so no man can use his reason without having been taught to use it. When the child goes to school, and undertakes to learn to write, the master, if he fails to make a round and beautiful O, does not say to him, "That is total depravity. You ought to write right." We wait for a child that is learning to write, and give him a chance to become proficient by practice. Early imperfections are not necessarily blameworthy. They are largely inherent, and necessary to the conditions in which men are placed in this world by the creative fiat of God himself. When a child begins to learn a trade we expect him to spoil tools. When a young man commences to do carpenter's work we do not find fault with him because he does not shove the plane just so, or use the saw in the best manner, or make his joints exactly right. We wait for him to learn these things. The process of learning a trade is called *apprenticeship*. We have an apprenticeship for the hand, an apprenticeship for the foot, an apprenticeship for the eye, and an apprenticeship for the ear. When a man learns arithmetic and grammar he goes through an apprenticeship of the reason. And do not you think that there is an apprenticeship for the affections and the moral sentiments? There is; and it is harder to develop the higher powers in the soul than it is to develop the lower; it takes longer; and it is attended with more imperfections; and these imperfections are a part of God's foreseeing wisdom.

Just here comes in the distinction between infirmities, or faults, and transgressions, or sins. The Scriptures recognize a difference in them. Wrong things done on purpose are sins; and those things which fall out from inexperience, from not knowing, from weakness or from imperfection, are faults. Imperfections inhere in the whole divine conception of the

human race on the globe; and men are filled with infirmities of necessity; and these infirmities break out into transgressions more or less complicated all the way down.

Now, I have done stating facts; but suppose that I should say to you, "The doctrine of the Bible is that men are sinful; and so sinful that they all need to be born again"? I do teach that doctrine, in its totality. Everybody is imperfect. Everybody sins with every part of his mind. Nobody ever becomes manly and strong except by an overruling influence that inspires him, and lifts him up from the lower plane to the higher.

Well now, after all the pother that is made about the doctrines of human depravity, and the need of regeneration by the power of the Holy Ghost, are they not true? Men kick them about like so many foot-balls; but do they not recognize them as true when they are stated in a different way from that in which they have been accustomed to hear them stated, and in a way which is suited to the experience of our times? To us the old doctrines may seem to be dying, but the old human nature is just the same everywhere. Men are empty, and do not know how to do right things till they have learned; and they learn painfully, and under circumstances in which they want divine inspiration; for no man rises from a low plane to the higher one of heroism and enthusiasm without the aid of a higher mind than his own.

Men think these truths are passing out of the world; but I say they are simply taking another form of exposition. The truths themselves are inherent, universal, indestructible.

I think that if there be any one thing that has been misinterpreted, it is the doctrine of the divine influence upon the human soul. As I recollect my own belief when I was a child—and I was an orthodox child—I believed that when a man who was born a sinner, and who had grown up in sin, came to a certain age, and went through a proper fermentation, and had dejected the lees, as it were, and left the wine of life pretty clear above, he was converted. I believed that he then passed from the north side of the hedge, where it was shady, to the south side, where the sun always shone. I believed that God shone on his elect, that they had the divine

influence, and that no others had. But my impression now is, that there is not a single human soul that is not the product of the divine Spirit, and that that Spirit is the vivific element of the universe; and that as the sun in spring knocks at the tomb of every sleeping plant, and there is a resurrection wherever there is a bud or germ, and there is not a daisy or harebell, or ranunculus, or flower of any kind that does not start at the solicitation of the sun's light and warmth; so the roots of power being here in human souls, there must be a shining of the divine Soul directly upon them to bring out in them intelligence, emotions, and moral sentiments. This down-shining influence of God is universal.

What, does the Spirit of God help men before conversion? Oh, yes; all men, always and everywhere—the savage and the semi-civilized as well as the civilized. All men, whatever may be their nature, are under the divine guidance of providence, and of the stimulating influence of the divine Spirit. All may not profit by it as much as we do, but it is as much for them as for us. All do not profit by the sun alike, but the sun shines as much for one as for another. Some are lazy and some are industrious; and it depends upon each one how far he shall derive benefit from the life-giving power of the sun. How much profit shall be enjoyed by each one is determined, not by the sun, but by the man who receives its light and heat. The sun means gold to one man, and mud to another. It means active energy to one man, and sitting in the corner of laziness to another. The sun is not to blame if men do not take its bounty.

And so inspiration comes to all men. Those who receive what they can take in of it are thus prepared to receive more, and to be made better and better by it. And I think that this doctrine of divine inspiration and down-shining, instead of being less believed than ever before, is more believed. It is taking on erratic forms and extravagant modes of expression; its philosophy is not always the wisest and best; but I think there is a prevalent growing feeling that God is nearer to the human race now than he was in the past; that he is the universal Father of mankind; that those limitations and distinctions which exist among men are a part of

God's original design; and that more men are coming to him, and are coming to him in more ways, than ever before.

Do not think that you are the only men that pray. Drunkards pray. There is not a man here who has put up such anguishful petitions to God as some men have who are very bad in the sight of the world. Do you suppose that men who are bad go down without prickings of conscience, and without many yearnings for the interposition of God's power? I tell you, the struggles of men who are going down to death are often a thousand times more admirable in the sight of God than the easy efforts of men naturally born to virtue. It was the one that was lost that God thought of more than of the ninety and nine just persons who needed no repentance; and I think the prevalent feeling is that God never was nearer to men, and never more helpful toward them, and never dearer to them than to-day. The first truth is the Fatherhood of God; the next is the brotherhood of man; and I think they were never before so prevalent and vital as they are to-day.

But look at it in another way. Take the elements of religion. Religion is not one thing. It means the moving of the human soul rightly toward God, toward man, and toward duty. He who is using his whole self according to laws of God is religious. Some men think that devotion is religion. Yes, devotion is religion; but it is not all of religion. Here is a tune written in six parts; and men are wrangling and quarreling about it. One says that the harmony is in the bass, another that it is in the soprano, another that it is in the tenor, and another that it is in the alto; but I say that it is in all the six parts. Each may, in and of itself, be better than nothing; but it requires the whole six parts to make what was meant by the musical composer. Some men say that love is religion. Well, love is, certainly, the highest element of it; but it is not that alone. Justice is religion; fidelity is religion; hope is religion; faith is religion; obedience is religion. These are all part and parcel of religion. Religion is as much as the total of manhood; and it takes in every element of it. All the elements of manhood, in their right place and action, are

constituent parts of religion; but no one of them alone is religion. It takes the whole manhood, imbued and inspired of God, moving right both heavenward and earthward, to constitute religion.

Many men think that a man who shudders and trembles with a sense of the presence of the Most High, who is so devout that he lays his hand on his mouth and his mouth in the dust, and cries, "Unclean, unclean; God be merciful to me a sinner," is a very religious man; but that depends upon circumstances. I have known men who went into a mood in which they were profoundly struck through with veneration when under religious influences, but who could not resist temptation in business, and would cheat, and would get the best of a bargain, and justify themselves by their love of others. They said, "I love my neighbor as myself,"—that was for Sunday; and they also said, "Every man for himself,"—that was for Monday, and the other week days. So you will find men who, in conference meetings and church meetings, or when the bell sounds, or when the organ peals, have reverent feelings, and in whom, under such circumstances, the worldly feelings subside. They go to church, and when they come to the church door they take off their hat, and march to their seat, neither looking to the right nor to the left, and bow themselves down, and go through the whole religious service, and rise, and go out, and feel that they have been religious; and they see boys pouring out of the church on the other side of the street, talking and laughing, and they shudder to think what an irreligious and godless generation of children is growing up. They have been doing their religion; and it is ink-color; it is dark and somber. But do I revile it? Do I say it is incongruous and inconsistent with Christian hope? In its place it is as much right as either part in a piece of music is right. The sub-bass is all right in an organ; but I should not want a man to play on a thirty-two foot pipe all the time and tell me that that was music.

There are other men who think that religion is a proper view of the whole scheme of Gospel truth. They lift their spectacles up from their sharp, gray eyes, and begin at the

beginning, and lay down position after position, and squint along the line; and if it lacks a thousandth part of an inch, they think there is heresy. Orthodoxy to them is right belief at every post and corner. This is intellectual religion. But do I ridicule it? No, not in its place and position. There is no man that is a man who does not think; and if he thinks he must connect his thoughts together; and if he thinks about religion, his thoughts must form a system; and provided he is not conceited, and does not think that he is the man, and that wisdom shall die with him, he has a right to his system; and the Arminian thinks his way, the Calvinist his, and the Arian his. They have their schemes of the universe; but the trouble is that they are almost all pocket schemes. Men's way of thinking is not God's way of thinking. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, saith the Lord." The difficulty with our systems of religion is that they are not big enough to comprehend all the knowledge and experience of the world. They are provincial, limited, narrow; and if you make them dogmatical and despotic they are cruel. Dogma is indispensable to religion, but it must be in its place.

There comes another man. He is not a reasoning nor a venerating man. He is one who believes in emotion. He likes a joyful hallelujah which well nigh takes the roof off. Occasions where there is singing, and shouting, and seizing by the hand, and laughing, and being happy, and making glad in religion—those suit him. "Ah! that is glory, that is glory;" he says. But do I revile that? No. I like to see it, provided a man does not say that that is the only thing in the universe. I say that in due measure it is to be respected instead of ridiculed.

Another man comes along and says, "Oh, the beauty of creation! Oh, the loveliness of virtue! How sweet are these sentiments!" Do I revile men of taste? Oh no, I do not revile them except when they attempt to despotize over me, and say to me, "My style of thinking is to be your style, or else you are a publican and sinner." Taste, in its time and proportion, is one element of religion. Religion is the whole of all of these things.

Then comes a practical man, and he says, "You talk about your metaphysics and emotions and sentiments; but what I believe in is good square matter-of-fact common-sense ideas. Show me something to do, and I will do it. That is what I call being a Christian." Well, to my thinking, he is a dead man who has no thoughts and feelings and sentiments. You can grind out, with Babbage's calculating machine, results about as good as these pragmatical men produce. Matter-of-fact things are good; but they are infinitely better where they are accompanied by taste and reason and veneration and beneficence than where they are without these accompaniments; for the whole is better than any single element.

Look at the ethical feeling—that is, the sense of duty and fidelity and right. See how strong it is, the world over. Take the element of humanity. Was there ever a time when the whole world's heart throbbed as it does to-day in response to calls for help that come from the needy? Let Chicago be burned, and, before the last peal of the alarm bells has sounded, from London thousands and hundreds of thousands of dollars are coming in. Let there be famine in India, and American Christians instantly send ships thither laden with supplies. Let disease sweep New Orleans, and every village or hamlet in New England takes steps for its relief. And do you tell me that humanity is growing less? It never was so broad and high and deep as it is to-day.

Take the element of domestic virtue. There never was a time when the household lived on so high a plane. There never was a time when "father" seemed so venerable, or when "mother" was such a charm to bring the thought of heaven to the soul. There never was a time when so many men were homesick for home. There never was a time when so many looked back upon the family in which they were brought up as a Garden of Eden from which they have been expelled by age and duty. The household was never before so much a power as it is now. It is subject to assaults, open or covert, but it will dash all these things from it. As the human body has in it a resiliency, or repellant power, by which it throws off morbific influences and attacks, so

the household has a power of virtue which never was so radiant and so irresistible as it is to-day. When the foundations of the family are adamantine, and when there is a crystal dome extending over it through which men see God and heaven, tell me not that religion is in danger. The family is God's primal church; and to-day it is the nearest like the divine and heavenly state of all things that we have.

Public spirit, which is a form of beneficence, was never stronger than it is to-day. It is growing more and more universal. And I judge of the preaching of a place by the public spirit which I see exhibited there. If I go through a village and see that the town pump is in a dilapidated condition, and the fences are tumbling down, and the town house is a rattlety-bang affair, taken possession of more by winds and rains than by men, and that the churches are poor, and the almshouse is a miserable place, and the roads are stony, and that there are no bridges but rails with a few clods thrown on them,—I say, "There is poor doctrine preached in this village." For any true preaching of religion will make men public spirited. No man can be preached to as he ought to be in regard to his duty to God and men without his religion having a reflex influence on his house, his barn, the public highways, everything that belongs to him in common with his fellow men. "Ye are brethren" is a part of the Gospel. Religion is not love to God alone: it is love to man as well. Among other things, it means public spirit—and by that test I think there is not a good gospel preached in these parts of New Hampshire.

Democracy in its true sense belongs to religion. Religion extends its walls about everything in creation. It looks upon all men, whether they be ignorant or educated, high or low, good or bad, as one household. It has that spirit which leads a man to extend warm quickening sympathies to his fellow men in proportion as they need them. Religion, where it exists in its highest form among men, draws them to those who are bad quicker than to those who are good, that they may give them help and succor.

This spirit is spreading everywhere; and I do not despair

of seeing the time when in even heathen nations the true spirit of reflected Christianity shall have its influence, and when men can go around and around the globe and find in every tribe and section—in the wilderness and everywhere—the common feeling that man is a child of God, and goes back to God, and is immortal.

That is not all. I ask you to consider what religion is according to the definition of Paul:

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

A man, going down to Boston, hears of Cushing's place. Everybody, I suppose, who has been to Boston, has heard of that place. There are magnificent flowers, and all sorts of fruits there. The fruits are the world's wonder for variety and lusciousness and perfectness. This man drives out to Cushing's, and goes around the place. When he gets there, the first thing he looks at is the fence; and he says, "Well, this place is not what it is cracked up to be—look at that fence! I have a better fence than that about my lot at home." He goes into the grounds and looks at the lawns, shaven and shorn, and he says, "I would give more for my medder with timothy hay in it than this docked, shaved lawn." He looks at the house, and says, "I thought it would be a fine castle, but it is only a house." He goes into the orchard and looks at the fruit-trees, and says, "There is a great deal of bad bark on those trees." But he came to see the fruit; and what has the fence, or the lawn, or the house, or the bark on the trees to do with that? The way to judge of the value of the orchard, or garden, or grapery, or hot-house is to try the fruit. The test of the fruit is the fruit itself. If the apples, and the pears, and the plums, and the peaches, and the grapes, and the figs, and what not, are good, that is enough. If they are large and ripe and luscious, what more can he ask? I do not care whether a man whitewashes or blackwashes his fence, or whether he uses guano or barn-yard manure, or what his mode of cultivation may be, the question is, Does he get good fruit? If he does, his method is good.

Now, I take it that the apostle is speaking of religion

when he speaks of the fruit of the Spirit; and the fruit of the Spirit is what? Orthodoxy? Oh, no. Conscience? Not a bit of it. One of the fruits of the Spirit is love; and is love dead? Does it no longer rock the cradle? Does it no longer sit patiently through the day and night by the bed of pain and sickness? Does it weep no longer for the outcast wanderer? Is there no sacrifice that love makes?

Another fruit of the Spirit is joy; and is joy gone? Is there no merriment among children? Are there no longer hours of conscious fidelity and heroism? Are there no acts, are there no developments, which imply the exercise of the noblest parts in men? Are they shaking down no fragrant dews in the soul? Is joy like a worn-out instrument whose strings are broken and whose body is smashed? Is joy voiceless and tuneless? Was the world ever before so full of joy as to-day?

Peace, the strangest of fruits—is it not slowly coming to be that which is the unison of all other qualities with blessedness in the soul? I do not mean that peace which is lethargic and sacrifices nothing, but that peace which comes from the excitement of all parts of our nature, carrying them above the ordinary line of experience. It is high up that the most perfect peace is. There are places in the nooks and ravines of the mountains where there is peace; but they who go up in balloons say that as they rise above the earth all sounds die away, and that high up in the pure ether there is perfect silence. And so, as men rise through the experience and trials of life, they find that high up there is a realm of peace. Is peace dying?

Some tell me they do not believe in religion because of the way that men act in Wall street; because they see elders, and deacons, and ministers even, doing wrong things. Of course they do wrong. They would not be in the human body if they did not. But go and see what mothers bear for sons. Go and see, in miniature, that same atoning sacrifice which Christ fulfilled, in those who literally give their life, living it, giving it, for the unworthy, the poor and the needy. Do you tell me that religion is dying out? It blossoms everywhere. Every household is full of it. Every village is filled

with it. Orthodoxy, the exact statement of things, may be shattered, church order may be changed; but never will religion die out until the human soul is void of love, joy, peace, long-suffering, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance.

Ye, then, who mourn because particular modes are changing, and think that religion is dying out, look deeper, and pluck up hope out of your despair, and confidence out of your fear; and to you that think religion is going away because of science, let me say that science is the handmaid of religion. It is the John Baptist, oftentimes, that clears the way for true religion. By religion I do not mean outward things, but inward states. I mean perfected manhood. I mean the quickening of the soul by the beatific influence of the divine Spirit in truth, and love, and sympathy, and confidence, and trust. That is not dying out. Not until the soul of man is quenched can religion die out. Not until God ceases to be God can religion be quenched in this world. It may have its nights and days; it may have its winter and summer; it may be subject to the great laws of oscillation and change; but, nevertheless, the word of God standeth sure; its foundations are immutable; and not until the last generation has been born and translated, not until the last tear has been shed, not until the last pulse of love has throbbed, not until the new heavens and the new earth appear, will religion die on the earth or lose its power among men.

PRAYER BEFORE THE SERMON.

We rejoice, our Father, that our thoughts are lifted, not by our wills alone, but by the inspiration of God; for we cannot discern the things that are spiritual and afar off save by divine help. Thou that broodest the world, and dost spread abroad thy wings and it is night, and let thy face shine and it is day—thou everywhere the beloved and the loving, we rejoice in thy succor and inspiration and help; and we implore thee, this morning, not because thou needest imploration, but because it is sweet for us to ask, and to behold that the blessings which we ask are given graciously. We draw near to thee as our children to us, that draw near with their helplessness and with their wants. We desire to draw near to thee with their confiding faith, and their love unaffected. We call thee our Father. Thou hast made thyself known to us as such. We do not discern in thee dreadful power, nor do we discern in thee the scowl of oppression and of cruelty. Our thought of thee is of all truth, of all justice and equity, of all gentleness and sympathy, of all love and helpfulness. What our father and our mother were to us, that art thou ten thousand times ten thousand fold. We grope as in the dark. We are like tapers here. Thou art the sun rolling in the immensity of thy being, and giving light and warmth to every one. We are afraid, O Lord our God, often, to trust in thee, fearing to exhaust thy mercy, which is ineffable, universal and inexhaustible. Thou dost pity us, knowing our frame, and remembering that we are dust. Thou dost succor the ill-deserving, causing thy sun to rise upon the good and the bad, sending rain upon the just and upon the unjust, and filling the earth with thy bounty so that all creatures, not excepting those that are most worthless, seemingly, are still cared for. The insect of the air, the worm of the earth, the fish of the sea, the cattle upon a thousand hills, all things that are created, are objects of thy thought. Thou dost watch over them; and how much more is man, made in thine image, destined to draw near unto thee, and to become a son of God in the heavenly land, perfected. In thee is our hope. Not in ourselves, but in the greatness, in the mercy, in the grace, and in the everlasting bounty of our God, we find inspiration of hope and of trust; for thou dost shelter those that know how to come underneath the shadow of thy wings. Thou art the tower to which, when hard pressed, thy people run, and are saved from their pursuers. Thou art the shadow of a great rock in a weary land; and blessed are they that know how to sit down in the shade in the midst of surrounding heat. We desire, O Lord our God, that thy name may shine more clearly, and that thy heart may be more aboundingly known among thine own people, and that those who are children may become witnesses more worthy of their parentage, and have more of joy and strength and faith and patience ministered unto them through the might and goodness of their God.

Vouchsafe thy blessing to rest upon us now, in the hour in which we are gathered together. How many of us! From what diverse ways! From what different experiences! And yet all united together by common infirmity, by common sinfulness, by a common

need of forgiveness, and by a common necessity for that love which comes only from the soul of God.

Vouchsafe to each one in thy presence, this morning, that which each one needs. Search the hidden grief of every one, and either heal it or give grace to bear it. Be with those that are near to thee in supplication day by day, and that will not let thee go without the blessing longed for, more precious to them than life itself. Hear their prayers, and answer them.

Those that carry sorrows, and wear them as a garment all the year round, and are acquainted with grief—vouchsafe thy presence, likewise, this day to them; and may they hear inwardly their name called of thee, even as Mary, in the midst of her tears, was called by her name by our Lord and Saviour.

And we beseech of thee that thou wilt strengthen the weak, and succor those that are in peril through overmastering temptations. Deliver from evil those that are beginning to be drawn into its whirl. We beseech thee that thou wilt look piteously upon every want and every necessity. May those that hunger and thirst after righteousness more and more be fed and filled. May those that are drawing near to the confines of life rejoice and look away to that eternal youth beyond, which waits for them. May those that are in the midst of life fulfill their duties with a right manly sincerity and earnestness. May those that are young grow up uncontaminated. With truth and honor and manhood undefiled may they enter into the places of those that are departing, and do better than their fathers have done. We beseech of thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon all our friends that are separated from us. Go with us homeward. Lead us to our children and our children's children, to our companions, to our parents, to our brothers and sisters, far away across the seas, in the wilderness, everywhere; and unite us in that love which is upon them and upon us at the same time.

We beseech thee that thou wilt grant thy blessing to rest upon this house and household; upon those that abide here and minister to our comfort; upon all that are gathered here to spend the days of vacation; and grant that this house may be filled with peace and joy. May everything that is benign and pure rule over whatever is selfish and proud and hateful. May the spirit of joy and of gladness, springing from sincerity and purity, prevail here from hour to hour, so that the blessing of the Lord shall dwell upon this place forever more.

We commend ourselves to thee. Take care of us while we live. Mark our years out for us. Not for our asking give us more or less, but according to thy wisdom. Think for us, dear Lord; ordain for us; and then make us able to say, in every emergency, The will of the Lord be done; till we have passed the vail, and the shadows flee, and the morning comes. Arise, O Sun of Righteousness, with healing in thy beams, and bring us where there is no night and no more sorrow forever. *Amen.*

PRAYER AFTER THE SERMON.

QUICKEN our faith, Almighty God. O thou Saviour that hast loved us, and loved us in our weakness and want, and art loving us into strength, and into truth, and into justice, and into patience, and into godliness, love us still. This is a wonder that we never could interpret if we had not been parents ourselves. See how we love our children, though they be erring. Others do not love them in their weakness, but we do; and thou lookest out of a larger heart of the same kind as ours. But while thou knowest how to teach the lore of love, thou knowest how to lay upon men responsibility; for whom thou lovest thou chastenest, and scourgest every son whom thou receivest. May we, then, have more and more confidence in thee, and accept the duties and discipline of life with more gratitude and cheerfulness and hopefulness, looking forward; for we are not to stay a great while here. We are in tabernacles. The city that hath foundations is not far off. We hear the voices of its inhabitants. From off the walls come wafted to us, now and then, the word of cheer, *Come;* and he that hears repeats it, and says Come; and whosoever will, let him come. And all are coming. All find their way back toward the Sun of Righteousness.

Grant, O Lord our God, that we may have more faith in thee, more hope for the world, more sympathy for the race, more kindness toward each other, so that we may stand holding each other up, pitying each other's faults, helping those that are cast down, and doing most for those that are most needy. May we seek out those that are in sorrows, and minister to them. Make us like thyself, thou that didst give thy life, laying it down and taking it up again, and that art forever, in heavenly places, carrying thy life, not for thyself, but for others; and being made like thee, may we be called sons of God, and find rest with thee in the heavenly land. We ask it through riches of grace in Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

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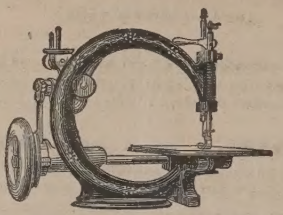

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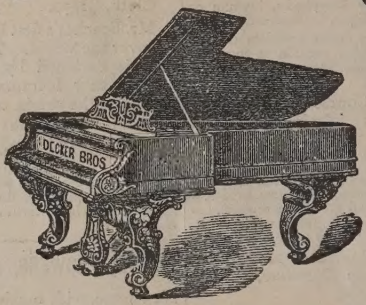

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